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New Light Shed on Cuban Invasion

TO the American people the dismal fiasco of the invasion of Cuba is still a mystery. A large part of this mystery is cleared up by an analysis of the events leading up to the abortive attempt, written by Stewart Alsop in the current Saturday Evening Post.

Until now the story has been wrapped in heavy shadows. Washington's often-quoted "usually reliable sources" have given the public a general picture.

Alsop pulls the various parts of the story together and pinpoints it with specific meetings and the views of the various men involved. Apparently he has interviewed all the key figures in the ultimate catastrophe. He shows how the judgments of the long-time "pros" of government outweighed the instinctive doubts of President Kennedy and certain of his political advisers. He analyzes the psychology that affected both the men who became enamoured of their own project and those who hesitated to object. The article is friendly and, indeed, sympathetic to the Kennedy administration. But its end result is a case history in the defects of both decision-making and operational processes at the highest level of government.

Alsop emphasizes that Kennedy inherited the invasion

Washington, including the President, were unwilling to question the judgment and self-assurance of the "experts," and so allowed themselves to be persuaded on the feasibility of the invasion idea. Alsop writes:

"On one point all witnesses agree. From the start Kennedy's instinct was to kill the operation. 'It never did smell right to the President,' one of his aides says. After the disaster Kennedy took full responsibility for what had happened. Under our system that is precisely where the final responsibility belongs. But with all the old pros favoring the operation, it is not hard to understand why Kennedy did not follow his own instincts and cancel the operation."

Alsop pinpoints the steps by which the decision was reached, and the men responsible. First there was the CIA. "Many CIA men were involved. But here it is necessary to mention only two names, which have already appeared in print, those of Allen Dulles, director of the CIA, and Richard M. Bissell, deputy for plans and operations. Dulles was in overall charge of the Cuban operation, but Bissell ran it on a day-to-day basis."

Sold on the Project.

They became "passionate partisans" of the project. Some of Kennedy's White House advisers:

"Allen and Dick didn't just brief us on the Cuban operation. They sold us on it."

Their plans were reviewed in detail by the top planning board of the joint chiefs of staff and then personally by Gen. Lyman Lemnitzer, chairman of the joint chiefs, and Adm. Arleigh Burke, chief of naval operations.

Fiasco.

Lemnitzer and Burke strongly endorsed the plans in writing to the President on two conditions—that the CIA's political estimate was correct, and that the anti-Castro forces would control the air over the battlefield.

Neither of these conditions was met, Alsop points out. The political estimate proved wrong. And intervention by Adlai Stevenson and Dean Rusk caused cancellation of an air strike. This left Castro with three armed T-33 jet trainers, inherited from Batista, which shot down the invaders' lumbering B-26s and sunk their ammunition ship.

This chain of events was started by the fact that Stevenson, American ambassador to the United Nations, had deliberately been kept in ignorance of a plan to use 16 Guatemala-based B-26 bombers with Cuban markings to knock out the small Cuban air force. Thus Stevenson would not need to lie if the issue arose in the U. N.

Stevenson Miled.

When an air strike was made April 15, Cubans in the U. N. denounced it as Yankee aggression. Stevenson swallowed a State department cover story that the pilots were defectors from Castro's air force, and learned too late they were not. Furious, he went to Secretary Rusk; and

idea from Eisenhower, but in view of the final decision omitted a vital part of it, namely, careful, "fishy-eyed" analysis of the plans by unemotional military experts.

Good CIA Record.

Responsible for initiating the idea that a few hundred determined men could topple the Communist regime on the island by sparking a counter-revolution was, according to the writer, the government's "department of dirty tricks," otherwise known as the Central Intelligence Agency. The CIA had some spectacular successes to its credit, including the U-2 espionage operations over Russia (brain child of Richard Bissell), considered "the most brilliant and productive secret intelligence operation in modern history."

The gist of the Alsop article is that the "new men" in

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